

MEMORANDUM

INFORMATION 24921

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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January 8, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: DR. KISSINGER

FROM: MICHAEL A. GUHIN *MGH*  
HELMUT SONNENFELDT *HS*

SUBJECT: Your Meeting with Dr. George Low,  
Acting Administrator of NASA

We understand you will be meeting with Dr. Low on Tuesday (January 12) or prior to his January 15 departure for technical discussions regarding space cooperation in Moscow.

Background

- On July 10, 1970 (NSDM at Tab A), the President decided that we should pursue space cooperation with the USSR through both high level diplomatic and technical agency channels.
- Additionally, the President approved the scope of a cooperative program suggested by the NSC Under Secretaries Committee. The program included (1) exchange of scientific experts and information; (2) coordination of separate national efforts, possibly tasks in unmanned lunar or planetary exploration; (3) complementary tasks in practical applications of space technology; (4) exchange of astronauts; (5) cooperation in areas such as tracking and communications; and (6) projects for improved safety and desirable commonality in instrumentation and operating procedures (e.g., development of compatible docking equipment.
- In late October of 1970, a NASA team, headed by Mr. Arnold Frutkin (NASA Assistant Administrator for International Affairs) and Dr. Robert Gilruth (Director, Manned Spacecraft Center) visited Moscow to discuss the possibility of developing compatible docking equipment. Compatible docking systems would allow, for example, rendezvous and aid in rescue with spacecraft such as our planned Skylab and the Soviet Vostok.
- The October meetings resulted in an agreement with the USSR which provided for the exchange of technical data on docking equipment (data recently exchanged by both sides), the development of what each considers necessary steps to make the docking systems compatible (planned for January-February), and technical working

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group meetings to develop a common set of requirements (planned for March-April).

Dr. Low's Visit

Dr. Low now plans about three days of technical meetings with Soviet officials (1) to advance the discussion on the docking system from technical data on "machinery" to "techniques" of how the system works and (2) to explore at the technical level new opportunities for space cooperation. The Soviet team will be headed by Academician Mstislav V. Keldysh, President of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

In your meeting, you may wish Dr. Low to do most of the talking, relating particularly the recent docking discussions and what he plans this trip.

You may wish, however, to give him some overall guidance or feeling for the President's interest in these talks. You will recall that, in the fall of 1969, you advised Dr. Paine to be somewhat reserved in approaching the Soviets on these subjects. This was apparently a tactical position based on the overall situation vis-à-vis the USSR at that time.

In light of the successful beginnings regarding docking systems and since it is generally desirable to keep international scientific cooperation insulated (to the degree possible) from current political circumstances, we see no reason to be "stand-offish" now and recommend that you encourage Dr. Low in this endeavor.

Moreover, in view of the currently difficult state of relations with the USSR, it would no doubt compound our problems were we now to walk away from these negotiations. They may indeed serve as a corrective to the spiralling series of disagreements, misunderstandings and, at least on the Soviet side, increasingly bitter polemics.

At the same time, it is important at present that we not seem overly anxious to produce forward movement since we think we must also convey to the Soviets our determination to stay the course with them even when the going is rough.

Consequently, we believe that Dr. Low should conduct his talks in a matter-of-fact, wholly substantive manner. He should give the Soviets no reason to believe we have lost interest and, should the Soviets wish to make this endeavor a victim of current difficulties, he should make sure the record shows that such was not our doing.

Also, Dr. Low should be cautioned to confine any public comment in Moscow or about his talks to the subject matter at hand and not to give them political or psychological weight beyond whatever specific progress may be achieved.

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